

with the cleanup and recovery. I stand ready to help ensure there is Federal assistance to augment the arduous but critical recovery work that the municipalities and the State already have begun.

Tornadoes aren't new to Illinois. They are pretty common in our part of the world, but this is an unusual situation we face. In the last 27 years, there have been approximately 194 tornadoes in our State recorded in the month of November; 101 of them were recorded yesterday—again, 194 in 27 years, and 101 yesterday. Is the weather changing in America? I think the people in Illinois would say it is changing for the worse when it comes to the incidences of tornadoes out of season in our State of Illinois.

There are two things I can predict about this disaster, without fail. One year from now, we will go back to these scenes and we will see the most amazing work having been done by so many families and so many neighbors to pitch in and rebuild. They never quit and never give up. They will be back. They will be back with their homes and playgrounds and churches and schools and shops. They will be back.

The second thing I can predict without fail—and it is not unique to Illinois, but I am so proud of it—is that neighborly quality where people pitch in to help one another in ways large and small, from showing up last night in Washington, IL, at one of the shelters with 35 hot pizzas; somebody just brought them in and said give them to whoever wants them. It is the little gestures such as that, and many others, large and small, which I am so proud to report that are just part of who we are. Again, not unique to Illinois, not unique to the Midwest, maybe not even unique to America, but time and again in times of crisis it comes out and shows itself over and over again.

WILKINS NOMINATION

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I rise to speak about the President's nominations to fill vacancies on the Court of Appeals for the DC Circuit.

The DC Circuit, which is considered to be the second most important court in America, has 8 active judges of the 11 judgeships authorized by law. My colleagues on the other side of the aisle have argued that the Senate should not confirm any of President Obama's nominees for these vacancies. But when there are vacancies in the Federal judiciary, it is the duty of the President to fill them, and it is the duty of the Senate to advise and consent in an honest and professional way to the filling of these vacancies. The Senate does not have the right to unilaterally determine that certain judicial seats and posts should never be filled by certain Presidents. That is exactly what is happening today in the U.S. Senate.

Today we are considering the nomination of Judge Robert Wilkins to

serve on the DC Circuit. He currently serves as a Federal judge for the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia. He was confirmed by the Senate in 2010 by a voice vote—no controversy. Seventy of my colleagues, including 28 Republicans, were here for that confirmation.

There is no question that Judge Wilkins has the experience, qualifications, and integrity to be an outstanding circuit court judge. He is a native of Indiana and a graduate of Harvard Law. He worked for 11 years as a public defender in Washington, DC, and then joined the Venable law firm, where he served as a partner for nearly a decade.

As a judge, he has presided over hundreds of civil and criminal cases. He has a reputation, an unblemished reputation, for fairness and integrity. The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, which strongly supports his nomination, said he has a "wealth of experience and impartiality" and a "steadfast commitment to enforcing the rule of law."

He has been rated "unanimously well-qualified" to serve on the DC Circuit by the nonpartisan American Bar Association.

No Senator—not one—questioned his qualifications during his hearing before the Senate Judiciary Committee. As a sitting Federal judge, he has already demonstrated sound judgment and integrity.

He deserves an up-or-down vote on his nomination. And he deserves to be confirmed. But my Republican colleagues have made it clear that, once again, they are going to filibuster President Obama's nominee to the DC Circuit. It has nothing to do with Judge Wilkins, they say. They just do not want any Democratic President to fill this vacancy on this important court, period. This is becoming a pattern, an embarrassing pattern, in the U.S. Senate, and this court is exhibit A in the abuse of the filibuster.

President George W. Bush made six nominations for the DC Circuit during his Presidency. Four were confirmed by the Senate. President Obama has made five nominations for the DC Circuit. If the Republicans filibuster Judge Wilkins today, as they have threatened, then four out of the five of this President's nominees will have been filibustered.

Let's go through these nominees, just to recollect.

Caitlin Halligan, Patricia Millett, and Nina Pillard—some of the finest attorneys in the country, some of the most outstanding women who have ever been nominated for a Federal judgeship—were all filibustered and stopped by the Republicans.

My Republican colleagues say this is an argument about caseload because there is not enough work to justify these judges. This argument does not make sense. My Republican colleagues were eager to confirm nominees for the 9th, 10th, and 11th seats on the DC Circuit when it was a Republican Presi-

dent. You did not hear them talk about caseload then. This is a manufactured excuse for them to filibuster President Obama's nominees.

When it comes to DC Circuit nominees by our current Democratic President, it looks as though we will see four times as many filibusters as confirmations. This is unacceptable. It is disgraceful. These judicial vacancies are authorized by law, and the President has nominated extraordinarily well-qualified women and men to fill them. These nominees do not deserve a filibuster. They deserve a chance to be judged on their merits.

I urge my Republican colleagues to stop these filibusters now and to allow an up-or-down vote on Judge Wilkins and these other outstanding nominees.

We reached a bit of an agreement here a number of years ago that we would not stop these nominees unless there were "extraordinary circumstances." That was the term that was used. It turns out one of those extraordinary circumstances is when a Democratic President named Barack Obama makes a nomination. Too many Republicans think that is extraordinary and that they can stop well-qualified, good people from serving our Nation and serving on this important court.

We will have a chance this afternoon. I hope Judge Wilkins will be given that chance to serve on this important court.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Ms. WARREN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

RETIREMENT CRISIS

Ms. WARREN. Mr. President, I rise today to talk about the retirement crisis in this country—a crisis that has received far too little attention and far too little response from Washington.

I have spent most of my career studying the economic pressures on middle-class families—families who worked hard, who played by the rules, but who still found themselves just hanging on by their fingernails. Starting in the 1970s, even as workers became more productive, their wages flattened, while core expenses such as housing and health care and sending their kids to college kept going up.

Working families did not ask for a bailout. Instead, they rolled up their sleeves. They sent both parents into the workforce. But that meant higher childcare costs, a second car, and higher taxes. So they tightened their belts more, cutting spending wherever they could.

Adjusted for inflation, families today spend less than they did a generation